

Examiners' Report
June 2015

GCE Psychology 6PS01 01

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Introduction

This is the first psychology paper that many candidates will have encountered and so will be a new experience for many. It is a challenging but straightforward paper with plenty of opportunity to showcase knowledge and demonstrate evaluative skills. The questions were based on set theories and studies so it was accessible to all candidates and the wide range of marks show that the questions discriminated between the differing abilities of the candidates. While it required a focused and motivated approach there is little evidence to suggest that candidates ran out of time. Some candidates did write too much in response to some questions and it is recommended that they look carefully at the mark allocation and use the number of lines provided in the answer book as a good guide to the length of answer required.

Overall the paper was answered well and candidates attempted to answer the question being asked in more detail than previous series. There was a nice balance of short answer and essay length responses.

Question 12 (a)

Most candidates noticed that this question only required the procedure of Hofling, however a few still included the aim or the results. This was fewer than in previous series where this type of question had been set. A few candidates still mentioned that nurses were asked to give the patient 'lethal dosages'. Most could gain at least three on this question although many centres had good detail including the correct dosage, times of the shifts and names of the doctor/patient etc., allowing full marks to be accessed.

This is an example of an answer that gained full marks. The answer is limited to the procedure and contains specific detail about this study.

12 (a) Outline the procedure of Hofling et al's (1966) study of obedience.

(5)

22

~~22~~ Nurses from 22 ~~psychic~~ psychiatric wards in the USA received a phone call from ^{Dr} ~~Dr~~ Smith from the psychiatric department. He asked the nurses to give one of his patients 20mg of Astrotan. The drugs were in identical ~~box~~ boxes ~~and~~ labelled 5mg recommended dose, 10mg maximum daily dose. The pills were placebo pills. The doctor told the nurses it was urgent and that he would return to the ward in ten minutes to give his signature authorising the administration of the drugs. Astrotan was an unknown drug to all the patients. The level of obedience shown by the nurses was recorded.

Hofling also conducted a questionnaire where he asked ~~the~~ student and graduate nurses what they would do in the same situation to compare opinions on how people believe they would behave and how they actually behaved.



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Examiner Tip

Be exact – give specific details about a study.

A mark is awarded for the information that the nurse is asked by Dr Smith to give 20mg to the patient. Nice detail about the dosage on the box gains a second mark. More detail about the drugs being a placebo and unknown to the nurses gives the third mark. The doctor telling the nurse he would be there in 10 mins is the fourth mark and finally the information about the initial questionnaire completes the mark allocation.

Question 12 (b)

The most popular response involved ecological validity and the fact that the nurses were in their normal environment. To gain full marks the candidate had to explain why this was a strength such as the nurses will show natural behaviour or there will be no demand characteristics so it is valid.

A succinct way of gaining both marks was to note the standardised procedure with an example and then explain that this gave the study reliability because it was replicable.

It is important in short question such as this to ensure you make two clearly distinct points to get both marks.

(b) Outline **one** methodological strength of Hofling et al's (1966) study of obedience.
Do not use an ethical issue in your answer.

(2)

One strength is that it had good reliability. Standardised procedures were used as the 'doctor' had to follow a script while on the phone call and the same procedure was followed for all nurses. This means the study can be ~~test~~ replicated and therefore tested for reliability.



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Examiner Comments

In this example the candidate has identified that there were standardised procedures and then given a specific example from Hofling's study i.e they followed a script. The second mark is given when the candidate clearly explains that this is a strength because it is replicable and thus reliable.

Question 12 (c)

Many candidates struggled with this question and often repeated the stem about informed consent but with no additional information. Others almost stumbled across marks by saying that the nurses were unaware and many recognised that deception was important but failed to link to informed consent. However there were also some competent answers that showed solid reasoning and gained the full two marks.

This question needs clear progression from the idea of informed consent and how this leads to other ethical issues.

(c) In their study of obedience, Hofling et al (1966) did not get informed consent from the nurses.

Explain why this is a weakness of Hofling et al's (1966) study of obedience.

(2)

- The nurses did not know that the study was taking place therefore they were not given informed consent and this makes the study less ethical as the nurses had no choice with whether they wanted to participate or not. This meant they had no right to withdraw, also lowering the ethics of the study.

(Total for Question 12 = 9 marks)



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Examiner Comments

The fact that the nurses were unaware is linked to informed consent and then this idea is expanded into a weakness i.e. the nurses had no choice and no right to withdraw. So this example gains the full two marks



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Examiner Tip

Answer the question – don't just rephrase it

Question 13

The vast majority of candidates selected Craik and Tulving as their study in detail. Peterson and Peterson was also seen but Ramponi was infrequently chosen.

13a In general there was insufficient differentiation between results and conclusions. Many candidates therefore gave figures and made a statement that just about passed as a conclusion and gained one mark. Some followed up with elaborated comments about deeper processing and achieved the second mark.

13b Most candidates recognised that the question required just one strength and limited their response. Quite a few chose reliability as a strength with reference to a standardised procedure. However these answers tended to be generic and the candidate had to include some specific details about the study to gain two marks. Generally candidates struggled to elaborate and gain three marks on one strength. Those candidates who picked an application were more likely to expand their answer for full marks.

This response used Craik and Tulving, the most popular study. This response gained full marks.

13 In cognitive psychology you will have learned about one of the following studies in detail:

- Peterson and Peterson (1959)
- Craik and Tulving (1975)
- Ramponi et al (2004).

Choose **one** study from the list.

(a) Describe the conclusions of your chosen study.

(2)

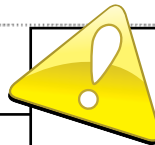
Name of study Craik and Tulving (1975)

It was concluded that semantic processing of words (80%) leads to the greatest recall, whereas structural processing leads to the lowest recall of words (15%) and phonetic processing is in between (50%).
~~It was also~~ It was also concluded that semantic processing takes longer than structural processing.

(b) Explain **one** strength of the study you described in (a).

(3)

One strength of the study is reliability as Craik and Tulving used a standardised procedure for example ensured the number of yes and no answers were the same. They also used standardised equipment such as a Tachistoscope. Both these factors mean the experiment could be easily replicated to produce similar results. In fact Craik and Tulving replicated many times and found similar results.



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Examiner Tip

Avoid generic statements, they don't gain marks.



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Examiner Comments

In this example in part a: the candidate has attained 1 mark for concluding that semantic processing leads to the greatest level of recall and that structural gives the least. There is then elaboration of this with the idea of semantic processing taking a longer time for the second mark. 2 marks in total.

In part b: The standardised procedure is made specific to this study by mentioning the use of the tachistoscope. This is followed with a clear link to replicability and reliability for a second mark. There is a very weak third mark for the idea that this has been replicated many times.

Question 14

Some candidates did not have the confidence or exam technique to answer this question successfully. They described the salient points of one type of experiment and then the other. This did not really compare the experiments and could only achieve two marks. Candidates generally know the features of both types of experiments although there was some confusion between a field and a natural experiment. Weaker candidates were likely to state that participants were always unaware that they were taking part in a natural experiment, whilst stronger candidates recognised that the differences were not always quite so clear. Many candidates wrote far too much, repeated some points, and could have used their time more efficiently if they had planned their answer.

Comparison questions gain more marks if approached systematically as in this case.

14 There are three types of experimental methods (natural, laboratory and field).

Compare **laboratory** experiments with **natural** experiments.

Comparisons can include similarities and/or differences.

definition ✓
ethic ✓
eco validity ✓
reliability ✓

Laboratory experiments are when the independent variable is directly manipulated by the experimenter to produce a reproducible effect on the dependent variable. Whereas a natural experiment takes place in the participant's natural environment and the independent variable is not directly manipulated by the experimenter, however they take advantage of the naturally occurring situation. Laboratory experiments are more reliable than natural because they consist of control which can be manipulated so that the conditions are the same for each participant, whereas with natural experiments there may be more than one variable having an effect which is hard to control and keep consistent for each participant. Natural experiments have high ecological validity compared to lab experiments because they do not consist of artificial settings and tasks unlike laboratory experiments. However laboratory experiments can be more ethical because the participants are able to give consent whereas in some natural experiments the participants may be unaware that they are involved in an experiment. Unlike natural experiments, a laboratory experiment produces a more measurable cause and effect relationship. This is because the independent variable is directly manipulated and the cause on the dependent variable can be measured.



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Examiner Comments

This is a concise, well written answer that achieves full marks. The candidate has explained the role of the IV in a laboratory experiment and then in the next sentence contrasted it with a natural experiment. Next ecological validity is considered in both cases and the setting of the experiment. So this will gain two marks. This candidate discusses the ethical issues well for a fourth mark and finally looks at cause and effect in a lab experiment. This has been expanded earlier in the response for a natural experiment so there is a fifth mark.



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Examiner Tip

Plan your answer to compare both sides

Question 16 (a)

Many candidates answered this question confidently. They knew the basic difference between the two states mostly basing their answer on free will and responsibility for their own actions. It was often explained in reasonable depth. Some went on to include the concept of moral strain or used examples from Milgram's study to illustrate the states effectively. Most candidates could achieve at least two marks.

While many achieved two of the three available marks, relatively few gained all three. This example shows how this could be achieved.

16 (a) Explain the difference between the agentic state and the autonomous state in Milgram's (1973) Agency Theory of Obedience.

(3)

The agentic state is where you are acting as an agent of somebody else whereas the autonomous state is where you act as your own conscious dictates. Moral strain occurs in the agentic state when you go against your sense of right or wrong to obey an authority figure and feel bad - This feeling doesn't occur in the autonomous state as you act freely. In the agentic state you usually obey an authority figure whereas when in the autonomous state you obey your own conscious. An example of being in the agentic state is obeying your parents even when you don't want to (e.g. eating all your dinner). Acting autonomously may be rebelling against your parents authority and saying no.



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Examiner Comments

This answer achieved 3 marks. A clear difference is given immediately between the agentic and autonomous state which is expanded later in the answer. Moral strain is also highlighted and shown as a difference between the two states giving the third mark.

Question 16 (b)

It was really pleasing to see that many candidates knew the supporting studies (Milgram, Hofling, Meeus and Raaijmakers) and could apply them to Agency theory. Mostly they gave specific detail, such as 65% of Participants in Milgram’s study to illustrate their point, although a few still just named the researchers. It was also encouraging that so many candidates read the question carefully regarding the inclusion of real life applications. The Holocaust, My Lai massacre and Abu Ghraib were the most cited events and particularly linked to the agentic state or the role of the autonomous state, such as the whistleblower in Abu Ghraib. This question was generally answered very well. A small minority of candidates misread the question and only evaluated Milgram’s study. Many candidates used extra sheets of paper for this response though in general they could have answered far more succinctly.

This was a response that gained all five marks available by using evidence in a methodical way to build the case both for and against agency theory.

(b) Evaluate Milgram's (1973) Agency Theory of Obedience.

You must include **at least one** way in which the theory can be applied to real life.

Strength
Milgram
Application
Hoffing
Weak
Indiv. diff.
Lab exp.
Circular
(5)

A strength to the Agency theory is Milgram's study of obedience. He found that 65% of the participants went to a full 450V and were willing to administer electric shocks in order to follow orders given by the researcher. This suggests that the participants had become an 'agent' to the researcher. However, this does not account for the 35% of participants who did not go to the full 450V which highlights that not all of the participants gave up their autonomous state for their agentic state. Another strength is application to real-life as the theory helps to explain why soldiers feel follow orders to harm other individuals. For example, in World War 2 many German soldiers were willing to carry out atrocities on innocent victims because Hitler had ordered them to. This suggests that the soldiers were in the agentic state. ~~Another~~ A weakness to the ~~study~~ ^{theory} would be that saying that someone is in the agentic state as they are being an 'agent' to another individual, and that they are being an 'agent' because they are in the agentic state is a circular argument and does not account for individual differences.



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Examiner Tip

Look at the marks available - fit the amount you write to the number of marks.

This response uses a clear identification of Milgram's study as evidence. There is also a nice link to the agentic state. Similarly when mentioning that 35% of Milgram's participants did not go to the full 450V there is a nice link to the autonomous state. Therefore two marks are credited up to this point. There has to be an application to real life in the answer and this candidate has an example of WW2 soldiers being in an agentic state and explains why they followed orders. So two marks are credited for examples. Finally there is a more general evaluation point about agency theory being a circular argument and failing to account for individual differences. Therefore this response achieves full marks.

Question 17

The responses to this question were disappointing. In some cases it seemed unlikely that the candidate had actually carried out a practical investigation. A surprising number merely described the strengths and weaknesses of surveys generically with no reference to any personal experience. Many students chose breadth rather than depth and used the GRAVE formula to discuss their practical. Again this tended to be generic and meant that they struggled to gain more than 3 marks. A few candidates did contextualise their comments and give examples of types of questions and sampling. This did include large amounts of description at times. Although difficult to assess fully, some practical investigations did sound unethical.

The response shown here has been written by someone who carried out the study evaluated. When responses are fictional it tends to be fairly obvious.

Evaluate your survey.

Your evaluation may include:

- validity
- reliability
- subjectivity.

Our survey was a questionnaire into prejudice. However in our questionnaire we did not put in any distractor questions and so this is likely to have lead to demand characteristics as ^{participants} people would have been able to guess what was being investigated. Furthermore our results are not generalisable as our sample was only 10 people so small and all participants were from the same school so ~~not~~ this ~~particular~~ school may have higher prejudice between year groups and so not representative of a whole population. However reliability was ~~to~~ strong as the questions on each questionnaire were standardised ~~and~~ so the questionnaire could easily be replicated ~~again~~ by someone else. Moreover our determination of whether the questions ~~were~~ ~~asked~~ and answers indicated prejudice are subjective. For ^{one of our} instance ~~the~~ question asking "should lower school *get more homework" and a "yes" response could be that participants believe lower school boys would benefit from more work to help them later in life rather than disliking so giving more work.



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Examiner Comments

This response illustrates evaluation of a specific study. There is good use of psychological terms. Some points could have been expanded, for example, an explanation of the effect of demand characteristics on the results. There is, however, a clear and well expanded generalisability point and the link between replicability and reliability is also elaborated. This achieves a level 3 mark. Given the time constraints it is a thorough answer and well contextualised to their own practical.



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Examiner Tip

Make sure you write about your practical and not surveys in general

Question 18

Trace Decay and Interference were by far the two most popular theories used. The descriptions were basic and limited many candidates to level 2. Candidates were often muddled in their descriptions of proactive and retroactive interference and relied heavily on sketchy accounts of everyday examples. The evaluation of the theory was generally better and most candidates knew some supporting evidence and used it appropriately. Some candidates used cue dependency in far too much detail as an opposing theory. It was obvious that they would have been happier to describe and evaluate this. Centres need to teach these theories in more detail to allow candidates to access higher levels. A few candidates wrote about theories of memory, such as levels of processing or reconstructive memory.

This essay on trace decay achieved a level 4, gaining 11 marks, not quite full marks but very laudable.

Trace decay theory argues that forgetting occurs when the physical engram in the brain fades away. It therefore argues that forgetting is an issue of availability as the ~~the~~ memory pathway no longer exists in the brain to be accessed.

A memory is formed as neurones make links with each other and form an engram. When one neurone is stimulated all the other neurones in the chain are stimulated which activates the memory pathway so the individual can remember the information.

A memory pathway can be strengthened by actively using it ~~and~~ to strengthen the links between neurones to make retrieval quicker and easier.

If the memory pathway is not actively used, ~~the~~ the links between neurones weaken until the engram no longer exists in the brain and is no longer accessible so ~~memory is impossible~~ remembering the information is impossible.

One weakness of trace decay theory is that it cannot explain why people can remember childhood memories ~~or~~ or highly emotional flashbulb memories.

which have not actively been used for a number of years. This idea shows that memories still remain available in the brain and despite the lack of rehearsal, the engram has not completely gone. It is a fairly simplistic theory of forgetting as it ignores the idea that some information is better ~~sent~~ remembered due to the depth of processing rather than the amount of rehearsal.

This theory has practical applications as it ~~can~~ can help students improve revision technique or help elderly people improve their memories by rehearsing information and strengthening the engram to make retrieval of information easier.

Another weakness is that this theory only really explains forgetting from the short term memory.

It is argued that information from the long term memory is never ~~lost~~ permanently lost we just lack things such as the relevant cues to access the information.

Supporting evidence from Peterson and Peterson shows that after ~~48~~ an 18 second delay information is harder to recall or forgotten. This shows how without rehearsal, the information decays and is lost so can't be transferred to the long term memory and remembered. However, much of the research that supports this

theory is lab based and low in ecological validity. The memory tasks are unrepresentative of real life memory eg. remembering word lists. However it is very difficult to measure ^{the durability} realistic memories as the research would take a number of years. ~~face studies such as dice wearing test refutes the trace decay theory as~~

It can be argued that this theory is simplistic as it doesn't explain the relevance of cues for example if a person cannot remember memories from their childhood then returns to the place where they grew up and the memory is activated by the context cues which suggests that memories are never permanently lost from the long term memory which refutes this theory that memories fade and are no longer available.

There is supporting evidence from Glanzer and Cunitz who found that words from the start of a list were remembered ~~as~~ as they were still ^{accessible from} in the short term memory and words from the end of a list could also be recalled as they had been transferred to the long term memory. Words in the middle of the list were less well recalled suggesting that they had decayed and were no longer available due to lack of rehearsal.

(Total for Question 18 - 12 marks)



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Examiner Comments

The description of the trace decay theory of forgetting includes breadth and depth with some well elaborated points. The evaluation includes a range of factors which are mostly appropriately used. The Glanzer and Cunitz study is more about displacement than trace decay. However the essay is on track and convincingly written meeting the criteria for level 4.

Paper Summary

- DO use specific points about a study to illustrate evaluation
- DO look carefully at the marks available to decide how much you have to write
- DO compare by systematically making a point from each viewpoint
- DON'T just rephrase the question – it doesn't get marks
- DON'T write everything you know about a theory or study – be selective

Grade Boundaries

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